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WHIRRAKEE

December 1982 Vol. 3 No. 11

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

WHIRRAKEE VOL. 3 No. 11 DECEMBER 1982

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club.
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (Acacia williamsonii) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region.

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COVER PHOTO

The Easter '82 Campout at Murchison.

PHOTO: Graham Hill.

Deadline for next issue is Friday 21st January.
(Typed contributions are preferred, but if this is not possible, then please make every effort to use neat, legible hand writing or printing)

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- EDITORS PAGE -

With this issue, Whirrakee completes its third year. It is once again the appropriate time to thank those people involved with Whirrakee production especially, Diane Hill for typing and Graham Hill for arranging the covers, and for his excellent series of orchid illustrations. Rob Moors and Tom Patullo have assisted with duplicating since the club bought its own duplicator earlier this year. Over the year, quite a few people have assisted with collation, assembly and mailing of Whirrakee, and thanks are due to them all, but especially to Tom Patullo, who has been responsible for the mailing. My grateful thanks are also due to the contributors, who once again have ensured that Whirrakee has been able to maintain its popularity and acceptance amongst members. It is becoming a valuable store of natural history information, as well as fulfilling its primary function as club newsletter.

The year has not been without its problems, and it has not always been easy to get Whirrakee out on time, but at least under the mailing-prior-to-the-meeting system, I am able to attend the meetings in a relaxed frame of mind. We have had problems with covers, but a change of printer has brought better quality at lower cost. We have had problems with poor xerox reproduction of the orchid illustrations, but, if things have gone according to plan, this months illustration should be of much better quality. We have had problems with our duplicator, which must have been fairly obvious over the last couple of issues, but the fault has been identified and rectified, and there should be better quality reproduction this time.

This issue is the first to go out in our new wrappers. These printed wrappers are now required by Australia Post, and continuance of our Category B registration was conditional on obtaining them. This was an unexpected and unbudgeted for cost - which brings me to the subject of club finances. The rate of payment of subscriptions has been much slower than usual, and about 70 members were still unfinancial as at 26th November. No doubt this is a sign of the troubled times, but it is making it difficult to run the club, with bills coming in, and the anticipated money not there in sufficient amount to pay them. Please attend to the matter as soon as possible. Remember, this is the last Whirrakee which will be mailed to unfinancial members. Reminders have been enclosed for unfinancial members.

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I guess most members are pre-occupied with trying to save their gardens. The evening watering sessions are a real problem, but so far our own losses have been relatively light, except for a large Melaleuca hypericifolia, which appears to be beyond redemption. Mulching, feeding, irrigation by moats around the more vulnerable trees, and so on, have held most of our trees and shrubs, and a few are now showing signs of responding to all the individual attention by actually resuming growth, despite the prolonged dry weather. In common with many others we are looking forward to our best crop of apricots ever. They obviously like a dry winter, since there is no shothole, and no gumming of the fruit. Please remember to provide water for birds. Our bird bath is proving increasingly popular, and gives us some pleasureable bird watching.

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Finally, in my capacity as President as well as that of Editor I wish all members a happy Christmas and New Year, and hope that as many of you as possible will be at our Christmas Social on the 8th December.

Eric Wilkinson, Hon.Editor and President.

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE

by John Lindner

The proposed Dalyenong Flora Reserve, lying 75 kilometres almost due west of Bendigo, is a rather special area deserving of more than passing interest.

Its rather distinctive woodland features include:

1. Stands of Buloke (Casuarina luehmannii) interspersed with eucalypt woodland. The most extensive stands of Buloke in North Central Victoria occurred on the plains, and have mostly been cleared for agriculture. " ... this reserve contains the study area's only substantial remnant, and in fact there are very few intact grey box - buloke woodlands left anywhere in Victoria." (North Central Area, Final Recommendations, L.C.C., 1981)

2. Areas of exceptionally large and old Red Ironbarks (E.sideroxylon). Large specimens of various other eucalypt species may also be found. The area once contained many more large old trees as evidenced by stumps and felled trunks still remaining.

3. A restricted area of low shrubby woodland on rather sandy ground, dominated in one part by Long-leaf Box (E.goniocalyx) and in another by Red Box (E.polyanthemos). This association contains a somewhat unique, thick understory of shrubs, which in some respects resembles heathland.

STATUS

The Land Conservation Council Final Recommendations for the North Central Area propose that the 1450 hectare area become a Flora Reserve (H 13), to be managed by the Forests Commission. Grazing should be phased out by 1987 under this proposal.

The proposed Flora Reserve adjoins to the east an 1120 hectare area recommended to remain for Hardwood Production (E 9), also to be managed by the Forests Commission.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Topography

The south-eastern half of the reserve has a ridge of high ground running through its length, ranging from 225 to 300 metres above sea level. In the south-east corner is a prominent high point of 293 metres, from which fine views of the surrounding country may be obtained. The gullies on the south and east of the ridge drain mainly into Smoky Creek, while on the other side they drain to the north-west towards Tarpaulin Creek.

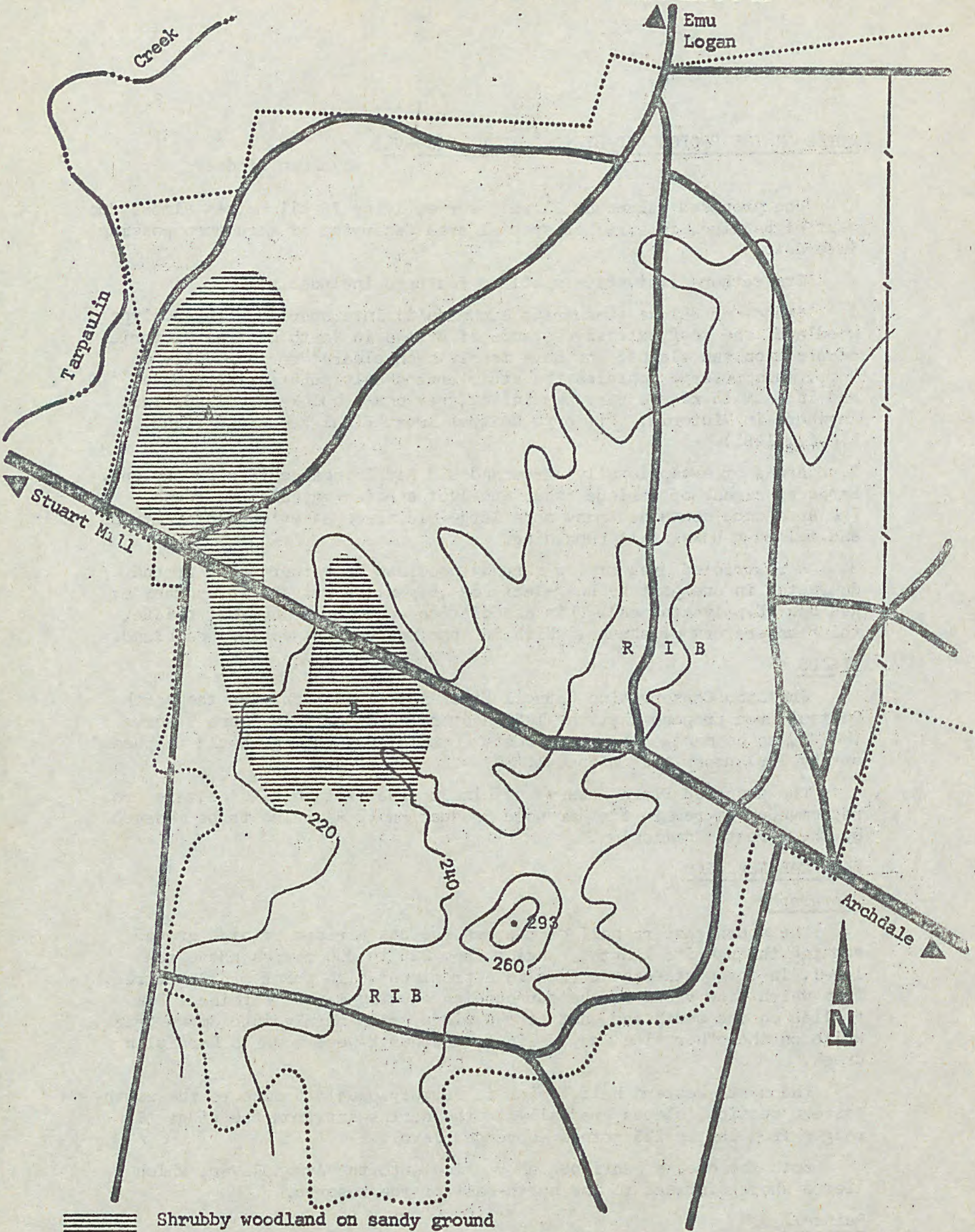
The north-western half, which is roughly equal in size to the south-eastern section, slopes gradually to the north-west from the ridge. It ranges from 150 to 225 metres above sea level.

Both the creeks mentioned above flow into the Avoca River, which lies a short distance to the north-east of the reserve.

Rainfall

The mean annual rainfall lies between 450 and 500 mm. Archdale, a little way to the east of the reserve, has a mean annual rainfall of 486 mm.

DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE



Shrubby woodland on sandy ground
A - Long-leaf Box dominant
B - Red Box dominant

R I B — Areas of large old Red Ironbarks

..... Cleared farmland

Main Road

Minor Roads, rough tracks

—/— Boundary with proposed hardwood production

Watercourses

Contours (20m intervals)

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE continued

Geology and its effects on vegetation.

The lower-lying north-western section of the reserve overlies a granitic intrusion termed the Carapooee Pluton (cf. Harcourt batholith). This granite has been weathered and eroded, and is overlain by younger, tertiary sediments, consisting of conglomerate and sandstone. These sediments were deposited by water, which eroded the metamorphic rocks surrounding the granite area and the weathered granite itself, and transported the resulting gravel, sand and clay down the ancestral tertiary streams, forerunners of the present ones. These tertiary deposits occur as a somewhat elevated plateau, which supports the distinctive low shrubby woodland already described. This vegetation association contrasts markedly with the adjacent taller woodlands.

In the shrubby woodland north of the main road (see map), the sandy soil is quite pale in colour as a result of the leaching out of iron oxide and its reconcentration in the subsoil as buckshot. This soil is of course derived from the weathering of tertiary sandstone. It is deep and loose here, and supports an association dominated by stunted, gnarled Long-leaf Box, with smaller areas of Yellow Gum and Buloke interspersed throughout, and Yellow Box and Grey Box on the margins.

The shrubby woodland south of the main road differs in both geology and vegetation. The tertiary sediments here are hard, ferruginous (iron-bearing) conglomerate and sandstone, overlain by thin stony soil, with much ironstone and buckshot. The trees here are even more stunted than in the sandstone area north of the road. The association here comprises Red Box which is dominant, with Long Leaf Box interspersed.

On the lower-lying ground which comprises the greater part of the north-western section, alluvial material has overlaid the granite to some depth, resulting in a typical woodland association of tall but widely spaced eucalypts, especially Grey Box, with comparatively little understory.

The ridge in the south-eastern section of the reserve comprises resistant metamorphic rock, resulting from contact with the subterranean granite mass. The metamorphosed sediments are of Cambrian age, even older than the Ordovician sediments of the Bendigo area, but similar in appearance. Soils along this ridge are shallow and stony, supporting woodlands of Red Ironbark, Red Box, Red Stringybark and Long-leaf Box, with Grey Box, Yellow Box and Yellow Gum on the slopes and lower ground.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Note on the following data

The material included here was gathered by various members on visits to the area in late October 1981 (after a very wet winter), and late September and early November 1982 (a very dry year).
The information here is not by any means complete or comprehensive. Additional records and descriptive notes will be most welcome.

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE continued

FLORA (with descriptive notes for some species)

Sequence and terminology are according to Beauglehole, 1982.

Cyperaceae

Schoenus breviculmis (Matted Bog-rush)
Listed by Beauglehole as the only North Central Victorian record, other than several records near Stawell.

Liliaceae

Dianella revoluta (Black-anther Flax-lily)
Dichopogon strictus (Nodding Chocolate-lily)
Very common and flowering in late October 1981, on the lower, flatter ground.

Orchidaceae

Caladenia caerulea (Blue Caladenia)
Caladenia catenata (Pink Fingers)
Caladenia dilatata (Green-comb Spider-orchid)
Caladenia filamentosa (Daddy Long-legs)
Diuris maculata (Leopard Orchid)
Glossodia major (Wax-lip Orchid)
Thelymitra anntennifera (Rabbit-ears)

Asteraceae

Helichrysum obcordatum (Grey Everlasting)
Helichrysum semipapposum (Clustered Everlasting)
Senecio quadridentatus (Cotton Fireweed)

Casuarinaceae

Casuarina luehmannii (Buloke)
Occurs only in the flatter and lower north-west section, where it grows in loose stands or scattered throughout other species of eucalypts. A particularly dense stand occurs in the shrubby woodland north of the main road, along the slopes facing Tarpaulin Creek.
Casuarina muelleriana (Slaty She-oak)
Seems to be confined to, but quite common in, the shrubby woodland south of the main road.

Dilleniaceae

Hibbertia exutiaces (Tangled Guinea-flower)
Hibbertia fasciculata (Bundled Guinea-flower)
Hibbertia stricta (Erect Guinea-flower)

Droseraceae

Drosera peltata (Pale Sundew)

Epacridaceae

Astroloma conostephioides (Flame Heath)
Common in the shrubby woodland.
Astroloma humifusum (Cranberry Heath)
Brachyloma daphnoides (Daphne Heath)
Occurs throughout, but is a dominant species in the shrubby woodland north of the main road.

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE continued

Leucopogon rufus (Ruddy Beard-heath)
Leucopogon virgatus (Common Beard-heath)
Particularly common in the shrubby woodland north of the main road.
Lissanthe strigosa (Peach Heath)
Ridges and slopes.
Melichrus urceolatus (Urn Heath)
Ridges and slopes

Lamiaceae

Prostanthera denticulata (Rough Mint-bush)
Shrubby woodland south of the main road.

Loranthaceae

Lysiana exocarpi (Harlequin Mistletoe)
Occurring on Buloke.
Beauglehole lists the reserve as one of four North Central Victorian localities in which the species occurs.
Amyema linophyllum (Buloke Mistletoe)
Listed by Beauglehole as one of only two records for North Central Victoria, and the only one in a biological reserve.

Mimosaceae

Acacia acinacea (Gold-dust Wattle)
Acacia paradoxa (Hedge Wattle)
Acacia calamifolia (Wallowa)
Acacia genistifolia (Spreading Wattle)
Acacia gunnii (Ploughshare Wattle)
Acacia implexa (Light wood)
Acacia pycnantha (Golden Wattle)

Myrtaceae

Calytrix tetragona (Common Fringe-myrtle)
Occurs throughout, but is a dominant species in the shrubby woodland north of the main road.
Eucalyptus camaldulensis (River Red Gum)
Margins of Tarpaulin Creek.
Eucalyptus goniocalyx (Long-leaf Box)
Grows in two situations.
1. On the sandy ground, as a stunted and twisted tree. Here it is dominant or sub-dominant to Red Box.
2. On upper slopes of the metamorphic ridge, where it is quite common and is not so stunted.

Eucalyptus leucoxylon (Yellow Gum)
Fairly common on the flats, where it is generally outnumbered by the Grey Box with which it associates. Common on the gravelly lower slopes. Scattered in loose stands in the shrubby woodland north of the main road.
Eucalyptus macrorhyncha (Red Stringybark)
Occurs on the poor shallow soils of ridges. A notable occurrence of very large old specimens may be found on the southern boundary where the road along there crosses the ridge.
Eucalyptus melliodora (Yellow Box)
Scattered throughout, except on most of the higher ground and ridges. However this species does occur all over the high point in the south-eastern corner of the reserve, where many specimens have typical "gum-like" bark, very similar to those on Mt. Tarrengower at Maldon.

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE continued

Eucalyptus microcarpa (Grey Box)
Abundant on lower slopes and flats.
Eucalyptus polyanthemos (Red Box)
Occurs on upper slopes and ridges, where it can be quite common in places. The shrubby woodland south of the main road is dominated by Red Box.
Eucalyptus sideroxylon (Red Ironbark)
Occurs on the poor shallow soils of ridges, and middle and upper slopes. Two notable areas, where numerous very old specimens of these trees are dominant, occur on the southern and eastern boundaries of the reserve on the tops of the ridges (See map.)
Leptospermum myrsinoides (Heath Tea-tree)
Shrubby woodland south of the main road.

Proteaceae

Grevillea alpina (Cat's Claws)
Shrubby woodland areas.
Hakea sericea (Bushy Hakea)
Throughout.
Persoonia rigida (Hairy Geebung)
One specimen found in shrubby woodland south of main road.

Rutaceae

Eriostemon verrucosus (Fairy Waxflower)
Shrubby woodland south of the main road.

Stackhousiaceae

Stackhousia monogyna (Creamy Stackhousia)

FAUNA

No attempt has been made to survey mammals and reptiles, so that the lists scarcely scratch the surface. The Mammal Survey Group will be carrying out some work here in 1983, using both cage and pit-fall traps, and spotlighting.

Mammals
Black Wallaby (Wallabia bicolor)
Observed in both shrubby and open woodland.
Eastern Grey Kangaroo (Macropus giganteus)
Observed in open woodland.
Rabbit (Oryctalagus cuniculus)
Diggings throughout and some burrows present in the shrubby woodland north of the main road.

Reptiles

Common Scaley Foot (Pygopus lepidopodus)
One specimen found in the shrubby woodland north of the main road.
Lace Monitor (Varanus varius)
One specimen observed on the southern boundary.

Birds

Sequence and terminology are according to Pizzey 1980. Except where otherwise stated, the notes refer to observations made on the Bird Observers Group campout during the weekend 25-26 September 1982. A few species have been added from visits at other times.

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE continued

White-faced Heron.	One seen.
Brown Goshawk	One seen.
Brown Falcon	A few seen.
Masked Plover	Flying over.
Spotted Turtle-dove	Only one bird was seen, apparently feeding on the ground. It is most unusual to see this species in the bush so far from a town.
Peaceful Dove	A few.
Common Bronzewing	
Galah	Abundant. Presumably entering the forest to nest in the hollow trees, which are very common.
Long-billed Corella	Quite a few flying over.
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Comments as for Galah
Musk Lorikeet	Fairly common. Feeding in flowering Yellow Gum.
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	As for Musk Lorikeet, but perhaps not as numerous.
Little Lorikeet	Comments as for Musk Lorikeet.
Crimson Rosella	Both adults and immatures fairly common.
Eastern Rosella	Fairly common. Nesting 1981
Red-rumped Parrot	A few birds.
Pallid Cuckoo	Heard a few times
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	Heard a few times
Boobook Owl	Heard once during the night
Owlet Nightjar	Flushed from a hollow branch.
Kookaburra	A few. One bird was flushed from its nest hollow.
Sacred Kingfisher	
Rainbow Bee-eater	
Welcome Swallow	A few birds
Tree Martin	A few birds
Richard's Pipit	Several pairs. Very approachable.
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Several pairs. Nesting 1981
Little Cuckoo-shrike	Several groups seen. Individuals of both light and dark phases were observed
White-winged Triller	One male seen, apparently only just arriving after the southward migration.
Red-capped Robin.	One pair seen in shrubby woodland area. Female did a broken-wing act.
Hooded Robin	A few birds
Yellow Robin	One seen in shrubby woodland area. Nesting 1981.
Jacky Winter	A few birds around the edge of the reserve adjoining open farmland.
Crested Shriketit	One observed in area with Yellow Gum and Grey Box.
Golden Whistler	Shrubby woodland area south of main road.
Rufous Whistler	Shrubby woodland area.South of main road.
Grey Shrike-thrush	Fairly common.
Crested Bellbird	One bird heard.
Restless Flycatcher	Heard in two places.
Grey Fantail	Shrubby woodland area south of main road.
Willie Wagtail	Not very common. Mainly along the edge of the reserve.
White-browed Babbler	One party observed.

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE continued.

Rufous Songlark	Heard once. Apparently just arriving from migration.
Superb Blue Wren	One pair seen on the roadside adjacent to farmland at Dalyenong, but not actually in the reserve itself.
Weebill	Fairly common in shrubby woodland areas.
White-throated Treecreeper	Quite common, especially in areas of Grey Box and Yellow Gum. Two fully fledged young were seen looking out of a nest hole.
Red Wattlebird	Common, especially in flowering Yellow Gums
Noisy Miner	Seen only along the boundary of the reserve, in Grey Box and Yellow Gum.
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	Moderately common throughout. A nest containing two eggs was found.
Fuscous Honeyeater	Very abundant throughout. Apparently the most common bird. Two almost-completed nests were found.
White-plumed Honeyeater	A few birds, mainly in Grey Box and Yellow Gum along the edge of the reserve.
Black-chinned Honeyeater	Widespread and fairly common.
Brown-headed Honeyeater	Several parties seen.
White-naped Honeyeater	Two birds seen in shrubby woodland area.
Black Honeyeater	Two males and two females were seen in the shrubby woodland south of the main road. * No nest was located but aggressive behaviour suggested that breeding was likely. These would presumably be unusual visitors to this area, having been forced by drought out of their desert home.
Striated Pardalote	Common.
Spotted Pardalote	One observation.
Diamond Firetail	Two observations.
Common Starling	A nest with young in a hollow limb was found on the edge of the reserve, but the adult was the only bird seen.
Olive-backed Oriole	Calling in several places.
Masked Woodswallow	Several birds in flock of White-browed Woodswallows.
White-browed Woodswallow	Abundant, mostly in small flocks overhead or in Yellow Gums where they seemed to be taking nectar. Some had dispersed into pairs and begun nest-building. Nesting 1981.
Dusky Woodswallow	Only a few seen.
Magpie Lark	
White-winged Chough	One flock recorded, in Grey Box and Yellow Gum area.
Australian Magpie	Fairly common. A nest containing young was located on the edge of the reserve.
Grey Currawong	One heard.
Australian Raven	Fairly common.

Total 69 species.

* Editor's note - see comments on this species in this month's Bird notes.

NOTES ON THE PROPOSED DALYENONG FLORA RESERVE continued.

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Land Conservation Council of Victoria, Melbourne, July 1978.

2. Final Recommendations North Central Area
Land Conservation Council of Victoria, Melbourne, February 1981.

3. The Distribution and Conservation of Vascular Plants in the North Central Area, Victoria.
A.C.Beauglehole, Western Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association, Portland, 1982.

4. A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia,
Graham Pizzey, Collins 1980.

Compiled by John Lindner, with helpful comments and additions by Don Franklin, and assistance from Eric Wilkinson for notes on geology. Bird list compiled by Don Franklin, with some additions.

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BLUE-WINGED PARROTS AT NEWBRIDGE

by Ray Wallace.

An acquaintance living at Newbridge informed me recently of observing two small unidentified parrots over a period of two weeks. They were seen feeding in the short grass on the roadside verges, in farmland habitat with scattered clumps of Grey Box. On the 30th of October, on a cool, windy overcast morning, I journeyed out to the area. We had only to walk 400 metres before flushing a pair of small parrots, which settled 40 or 50 metres away in a large Grey Box. On closer inspection they proved to be Blue-winged Parrots (Neophema chrysostoma).

The most obvious identification guide was the broad, one-coloured, dark blue markings on the wing. The two other Neophema species recorded for this district, namely the Turquoise Parrot (N.pulchella) and the Elegant Parrot (N.elegans), have a light and dark blue wing marking. Blue-winged Parrots in the field are obviously duller than the males of the Red-rumped Parrot (Psephotus haematonotus) and both sexes of the Blue-winged Parrot are inclined to look chubbier than female Red-rumped Parrots. This effect is heightened by the fact that Blue-winged Parrots have rather broad tails, where as those of Red-rumped Parrots are rather long and narrow. The female of this uncommon little parrot in our district is decidedly duller Only one pair of the birds have been seen in the area.

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THE MYSTERY OF THE SILICA NODULES

by Leon Ruedin

While cutting Eucalyptus for oil production on our property in the County of Whirrakee, which is unique mallee scrub - hilly, with outcrops of coloured shales and sandstones - I picked up, and was intrigued by, little lilac coloured, lens shaped discs of a fine grained silicious material, about 2 inches - 3 inches in diameter, and 5/16 - 3/8 of an inch thick.

On numerous occasions I gave them to interested people, who promised to solve the mystery, but no one ever did. Time marched on - about 40 years in fact. Recently I gave Jack Kellam a few chips, as I did not have any complete specimens left.

By a chance of fate, two geologists from Cambridge University in England came to Bendigo, to see the graptolites of the Bendigo area first hand. They were directed to view Jack Kellams extensive collection, which to them was a bonanza. While enjoying a cuppa and cake, Jack happened to glance at the window sill, which always has a collection of some sort or other, when his eye caught the lens shaped "biscuits". He handed these to Dr. Rickards, who immediately recognised them as Silica nodules, which occur in shales and limestones. So ended the 40 year old mystery.

It may be of interest to state that I found these nodules along a line of shale near the Eucalyptus Factory, and another run 1 1/4 miles west. Another single stone was found by my son Noel, when we were digging footings for his house at Huntly.

Seeking more information, I contacted the Minerals and Energy office in Bendigo, who, with their usual co-operation, unearthed a two leaf manuscript written about 1946, by J.Cundill, who found many specimens in and on a road cutting on the Barnadown Road.

I searched the area, but the flanks of the road had been bulldozed, and the material scattered, with the result that I have been left with the Mystery of the Missing Silica Nodules.

You may ask how are they formed? I believe that they start as a nucleus absorbing silica from solution, thus lifting the layers of shale to form a lens shaped nodule, but why are they roughly this same size?

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LITTLE RAVENS AT NEWBRIDGE AND EDDINGTON

In the same area as the Blue-winged Parrots were seen (see above), a month earlier a flock of approximately 200 Little Ravens (Corvus mellori) was observed feeding in a barish paddock, and many of the Grey Box trees contained a nest, usually half-way up the tree. I counted 14 nests in a very small area. This is contrary to Don Franklin's observation that the large springtime flocks may not be breeding birds. On October 10th, 1982 John Lindner and myself observed a large number of what we presumed to be Little Ravens feeding in an irrigated paddock at Eddington. As it was primarily an archaeological excursion we were engaged upon, a closer examination could not be pursued

by Ray Wallace.

THE ORCHIDS OF BENDIGO AND DISTRICT

- PART 7, THE CALOCHILUS or BEARD ORCHIDS and the MICROTIS or ONION ORCHIDS

by Bob Allen and Tom Patullo
Illustrated by Graham Hill

THE GENUS CALOCHILUS - THE BEARD ORCHIDS

This is a small genus of about eleven species, with nine of them restricted to temperate Australia. The name "Beard" orchid alludes to the very conspicuous, hairy labellum which most of them have. In the Bendigo district, however, we have only four species, of which two have hairy labellums. Of the other two, one is beardless, and the other is nearly so. The name Calochilus is derived from two Greek words - Kalos - beautiful and Kheilos - a lip. This "beautiful lip" alludes again to the masses of hairs on the labellum of some of the species.

The leaf is solitary, long and channelled; the dorsal sepal erect and broad; the lateral sepals, broad pointed and somewhat spreading. The petals are shorter than the sepals, and the labellum longer than all the other segments.

Calochilus robertsonii Purplish Beard-Orchid

This is by far the commonest beard orchid in the Bendigo district, and has been recorded from all states of Australia. It is widely distributed in Victoria on heath lands and in light forests, and flowers in spring. The flowers vary greatly in numbers. Sometimes there is only one on a short stem, and sometimes they are numerous on a tall stem well over twelve inches high. They are greenish or brown. The leaf is long, thin and triangular in section, with up to three stem bracts. The column wings each have a bead like gland at the base, connected in front by a low purplish ridge. The dorsal sepal is hooded, and the petals are yellowish, with fine red stripes. The most conspicuous part of the flower, however, is the labellum, which is much longer than the other floral parts and is bedecked with long, glistening purple hairs. The end of the labellum terminates in a short, glabrous ribbon. The name robertsonii is to commemorate Mr. J.G.Robertson, a Victorian botanist.

Calochilus campestris Copper Beard Orchid

campestris - growing in fields.

This orchid is described as being the most wide-spread member of the genus in Victoria - "ranging from the far north west to the extreme south-eastern coast, and from sea level to the sub alps through a diversity of habitats". It is smaller than C.robertsonii, with the small floral parts yellowish-green with reddish brown markings. The leaf is long, narrow and fleshy with several channels, and sheaths the stem at the base. It has up to three stem bracts, quite long, and green or copper coloured. The column is bare, pointed, and very prominent, and gives the clue as to why this orchid is sometimes referred to as the "Beaked" orchid. The distinguishing feature of this orchid is the fact that the beard covers only the lower two thirds of the labellum, with the upper third bearing two smooth plates. It has been noted at Inglewood, Bendigo, Maldon, and on several occasions the late Fred Taylor took me to see clumps of them eighteen miles from Bendigo between Woodbrook and Walmer late in October.

THE ORCHIDS OF BENDIGO AND DISTRICT continued

Calochilus imberbis Naked, or Beardless Beard Orchid

A rather robust plant, over a foot high, with a loose bract about the middle of the stem. The leaf is long, fleshy, rigid and channelled. The flowers are up to five in number, green with purplish brown stripes. The labellum is marked with conspicuous purplish nerves, but is entirely devoid of glands or hairs of any kind. C.imberbis is remarkable for this simple beardless labellum. It is a unique character within the genus, giving the flower a strange appearance and serving to distinguish it from all other forms.

This orchid is rare in Victoria, where it is known only by a few collections from isolated localities in the central regions. It usually inhabits light sclerophyll forests, such as the type locality of Rushworth where it was first discovered on 3rd of October 1923, by Mrs Edith Rich of Rushworth. Since then it has been found at Timbertop near Mansfield; at one spot between Macedon and Gisborne; at Ringwood, and several places in Tasmania. The late Fred Taylor and I had the pleasure of finding several in flower in the Taradale area during an excursion on 3/10/1969.

Calochilus richae Bald-tip Beard Orchid

richae - to commemorate the finder of this orchid, Mrs Edith Rich of Rushworth Vic.

This is the rarest of our Beard orchids, as there have been no further localities reported since the original record on October 23rd 1928, from the vicinity of Whroo, five miles south of the town of Rushworth. (They have been observed on many occasions in this area since then).

This orchid is rather slender, being up to about eight inches high, with up to three long and lanceolate stem bracts. The one to four flowers are more reddish than green, and are on long slender crimson pedicels (a single flower stem). The various flower segments are conspicuously veined with red stripes. The labellum is beardless, like that of C. imberbis, but differs in the fact that the top two thirds is covered by very short purple, sessile glands, or pimples, but without hairs. The bottom third is bare.

C. imberbis and C. richae are both very rare orchids, and are not known any further north beyond Victoria. They both have in common that they were first found by Mrs Edith Rich of Rushworth, C. imberbis on 3rd October 1923, and C. richae on 23 October 1928.

THE GENUS MICROTIS - THE ONION ORCHIDS

Fourteen species of Onion orchids have been recorded for Australia, with twelve of them being endemic.

The genus has representatives in New Zealand, New Caledonia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and China.
The reason for the name Onion orchid no doubt is because of the likeness of their single leaf to those of the Onion family. They are solitary, green, hollow, and often exceed the inflorescence. The flower stem etc., develops inside the hollow leaf, and finally breaks through half way up before full development.

Onion orchid flowers are very tiny, and clustered on a single spike, and this business of breaking through the hollow, onion-like leaf blade is shared with the Prasophyllum orchids described in Part 6 last month. They differ from them however, in having the flowers in the normal upright position, and not "upside down' as the Prasophyllums are. The tiny flowers are green to yellowish in colour, and usually grow in colonies. A magnifying glass is essential when studying these flowers.

1. Calochilus robertsonii — Purplish Beard-orchid
2. Calochilus imberbis — Naked or Beardless Beard-orchid
3. Calochilus campestris — Copper Beard-orchid
4. Calochilus richae — Bald-tip Beard-orchid
5. Microtis parviflora — Slender Onion Orchid

ORCHIDS OF BENDIGO AND DISTRICT continued

Microtis uniflora Common Onion Orchid

This is a variable orchid, but rather more robust than the other members of the genus. Sometimes quite short, but often up to twelve inches high. The leaf is solitary, leek or onion like, green, hollow, and often exceeding the inflorescence. The flowers are small, green, and quite numerous. They are closely placed in a dense, terminal spike. The dorsal sepal is erect. The lateral sepals are shorter and rather blunt, and often only gently recurved. The petals are much shorter than the lateral sepals. The labellum is shortly oblong, much shorter than the ovary. It is broadly emarginate (having a pronounced notch at the apex) and has crisp or irregular margins. A large callosity occupies the upper half of the lamina. This orchid is quite wide-spread, easily seen in the Whipstick, but hard to see when growing among grasses. It is found in all States of Australia, and books tell us that it is also to be found in New Zealand, New Caledonia, Java, China and Japan.

Microtis parviflora Slender Onion Orchid

The Slender Onion orchid, as its name implies, has a slender inflorescence, contracting upwards, and is spire shaped. The tiny yellowish green flowers are on short pedicels (the stem of a single flower). They are smaller and less crowded than those of M. unifolia. The leaf is almost identical to the leaf of M. unifolia, and is solitary, often longer than the flower spike, hollow, with the flower stem protruding through. The dorsal sepal is ovate, with a short recurved point. The lateral sepals are oblong, rather blunt and recurved. The petals are also blunt, erect, and partly hidden by the dorsal sepal. The labellum is blunt at the tip, one could almost say tongue shaped, with two small callosities at the very base, but none towards the apex. As with M. unifolia these orchids are hard to find, especially in good seasons when growing among grasses. They are common in our district, and throughout Victoria, and the experts tell us that they are also found in New Zealand, New Caledonia, and various islands as far north as China.

To distinguish between these two Onion orchids you must have some sort of a hand lens to boost up the tiny flowers.

Only M. parviflora has been illustrated, as both are very similar, but they can be distinguished as follows.

Microtis unifolia

A large callosity occupying the upper half of the lamina.(It darkens with age.)

Microtis parviflora

Two small callosities at the very base of the lamina. They also darken with age.

Labellum broadly emarginate (or notched)

Labellum blunt at tip (or tongue shaped).

THE ORCHIDS OF BENDIGO AND DISTRICT continued

ORCHID FACTS No. 7

THE WORLDS TALLEST ORCHID

From "Orchids of Australia" by W.H.Nicholls

Galeola foliata The Great Climbing Orchid.

This orchid is the tallest growing orchid in the world, for it grows to a height of from 6 to 15 metres (20 to 50 feet). It clings to the tree trunks by means of brownish sucker-like roots, which attach themselves to giant forest trees and bite deeply into the bark. The plant has no true leaves as the specific name - "foliata" would imply, but large bracts, which arise at the nodes. The sepals and petals are around 10 inches long and are coloured yellow. The labellum is orange-scarlet, and the whole flower is strongly scented like wild-bee honey. Often the panicles of flowers are extensive, sometimes measuring as much as 180 cm (6 feet) in length, and almost as broad. It inhabits the dense coastal scrubs and rain forests, and really presents a magnificent sight in full flower. The flowering period is from November to January, and the distribution is from the Endeavour River in Northern Queensland to the North Coast of New South Wales. Often locally common, but becoming rare due to the extensive clearing of its habitat.

ORCHIDS TO LOOK FOR DURING DECEMBER AND JANUARY

A bushland devoid of Orchids! "How sad". No quaint, interesting little terrestrial gems to quicken the interest of an otherwise dull bush stroll, through the parched, cupmoth lava infested eucalypt forests that are our lot in the Bendigo area this year. And so the long wait for rain continues.

As there will be no issue of "Whirrakee" in January we will include the two months of December and January in our list of "Orchids to look for".

Caleana major	(Dec.)
Dipodium punctatum	"
Paracaleana minor	"
Prasophyllum fuscum	"
Spiranthes sinensis	(Jan.)

During the early part of December, there could be a few late specimens of some of the Pterostylis group, such as Pterostylis biseta, P. boormanii and P. gibbosa.

Errata Vol. 3 No.10. "Orchids to look for in November" should read.
Diuris punctata and var. longissima
" brevissima

BIRD NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS FOR NOVEMBER

Our guest speaker for November was Mr Frank Stevens, from Melbourne, who gave an entertaining talk and showed slides of the birds of the western United States. The talk, spiced with humour, informed us about species that we had often heard about through the media. Birds such as Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Cowbirds and Roadrunners all came to life with Frank's gifted oratory.

The current drought, officially the worst since records began, must be affecting our bird population. Frank Stevens, recently back from a trip through western N.S.W., painted a bleak picture of the country side.

Although our local bush is tinder dry, there does not seem to be a noticeable difference from previous springs. Birds are singing, migrants have arrived and many species of birds are nesting. Possibly the birds that are most affected by the drought are the nectar seeking honeyeaters, who rely on the spring flora for their existence. This could explain the actions of a White-eared Honeyeater observed with a thin, red 3 cm long plastic tube. The bird was inserting its beak into the tube and raising it into the air. The observer assumed that the birds actions could be explained if the bird, desperate for nectar, associated the red with a flower and the tube with a Grevillea.

The dreaded Indian Myna has expanded its northerly distribution by being recorded at Fosterville near Harringtons Gate. Four of these introduced birds were seen in mid October. They are aggressive birds, like most successful introduced birds, and will compete for nesting sites with our native birds. They may not be quite the menace we expect them to be, as they are cosmopolitan birds, their preferred habitat being towns and cities.

Another introduced bird common around town is the Domestic Pigeon. One can find them nesting around wheat silos and on building ledges, and they are not usually found nesting away from human habitation. In September, at Bamawn, a pair were discovered nesting in a crevice in an old Grey box tree.

Two species of birds usually associated with the drier inland have been recorded in our district. The first, a Pied Butcherbird, was seen at Bamawn on the 5th of October, while two separate sightings of Cockatiels were noted. These observations were made at Sedgwick and south of Marong on the same day, the 2nd of November.

Painted Honeyeaters were reported in good numbers in the Spring of 1980 around the Bendigo district. The Spring of 1982 brought with it good numbers of these birds to the Maryborough bush, although they were restless and did not stay in any one location for longer than four days. Mr. T. Patullo tabled a freshly killed Painted Honeyeater at the main Club meeting on 10th November. The bird was found in his garden at Maiden Gully, so the birds are obviously around in the Bendigo district.

Observations from Bridgewater were again fruitful, with a Dollarbird being sighted near last years breeding hollow (the hollow this year being occupied by a Galah), a Swamp Harrier flying low over a paddock and three Marsh Terns (Whiskered Terns) hawking over an irrigation paddock. These observations took place on the 18th October.
Not far from Bridgewater, at Newbridge, a pair of Blue-winged Parrots * were sighted on the 30th October. The habitat was farmland interspersed with Grey Box.

* Editors Note: See article by Ray Wallace.

The Black Honeyeaters that were discovered at Dalyenong on the 24th of September have since left. Apparently several Field Naturalists clubs ventured to the area on the 17th of October and found good numbers of Black Honeyeaters, more than were reported by our club, but by the 26th of October a search of the area failed to find any.

Other sightings of interest were five Caspian Terns on Green Lake near Corop (20/10), two Brush Bronzewings at Ross Spring in the Big Desert (9/10), a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets at Geelong (24/10), two Budgerigars at Dalyenong (26/10) and a White-breasted Woodswallow perched on a fence between Eddington and Laanecoorie on the Bendigo road (23/10).

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In the September 1982 issue of the "R.A.O.U. Newsletter" it was reported that Dr. H. J. (Harry) Frith had died.
Dr. Frith was one of Australias most prominent ornithologists and was well known both in Australia and overseas because of his books, especially "The Mallee-fowl" and "Water-fowl in Australia". Recently, another book by Dr. Frith, "Pigeons and Doves of Australia" has been published, which is the culmination of 18 years of study, fieldwork and observation of Australian species held in captivity.

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Two short articles relevant to the Bendigo area have recently been published in "The Bird Observer". In the August, 1982, issue there is "Birds in cold weather", at Inglewood, by Barbara Salter (Page 59), and, in the October, 1982, issue (pages 78-79) there is "Honeyeaters of the Bendigo district" by J. V. Ryan.

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SQUATTERS OF THE AVIAN WORLD

by Tom Patullo.

Early this year a family of busy white browed Babblers invaded our garden, and immediately carried out a furious campaign of communal nest building. Soon there were four huge nests situated in different positions around the garden. Whether these nests were ever used or not, I am not sure, as they all had an abandoned look about them.

After raising one brood in a nest situated high in an ironbark tree, a pair of Bronze-wing Pigeons adopted one of the Babblers nests, added a few twigs and duly raised another healthy young Bronze-wing in their borrowed nest.

No sooner had the young pigeon vacated the premises, than a pair of grey Thrushes showed interest. After some renovations and additions to the battered old structure, the thrushes are now busy at raising a family. There are three beautiful eggs.

As the nest is quite close to our bedroom window we wake each morning to the beautiful song of the male as he calls to his mate.

COMMITTEE REPORT FOR NOVEMBER

The November meeting was held at the home of Ian Brown on Monday 22nd.November.

1. As a rubber stamp for stamping the wrappers of Whirrakee was unacceptable to Australia Post, a decision to purchase 2000 new wrappers was passed.

2. It was decided that the Club participate in the 1983 Bendigo Community Day.

3. Nomination for Club membership was received for Mr. and Mrs. G. Adam and family.

4. The resignation of Mr. and Mrs. Ian Brown was accepted with regret.

5. A tentative syllabus for 1983 was presented and considered. Further discussion to finalize the syllabus is needed.

6. A letter is to be sent to the Premier enquiring about the Government's decision on the L.C.C. recommendation for the proposed Whipstick and Kamarooka State Parks.

7. That we write to the local member and Prime Minister asking the Federal Government to meet its obligations to protect a World Heritage area, namely South-West Tasmania.

8. It was decided to purchase only 50 reams of paper for Whirrakee due to the very slow payment of subscriptions.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

1. The Victorian Naturalist Vol.99 No.5 Sept/Oct.'82
2. Ballarat F.N.C. Excursion - News Sheet Nov. 82
3. World Wildlife Fund Newsletter. No.13 Oct./Dec.82
4. Fund for Animals Newsletter Vol.2 No.6 Oct.82
5. A.C.F. Newsletter Vol.14 No.10 Nov.82
6. Geelong F.N.C. Newsletter No.199 Nov.82
7. The Bird Observer No.610 Nov.82
8. Australian Wildlife Research Vol.9 No.3

BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Address for correspondence, P.O. Box 396, Bendigo 3550.

Office bearers for 1982-1983

PRESIDENT	Eric Wilkinson	7 Weatherall St.Cal.Gully	46 8736
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT	Rob Moors	Sedgwick	39 6254
JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT	John Lindner	62 Simpsons Rd.E'hawk	46 7132
SECRETARY	Laurie Leeson	76 Lawson St.,Spring Gully	43 0521
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Rod Fyffe	546 Hargraeves St.Bendigo	43 7673
TREASURER	Glenise Moors	Sedgwick	39 6254
MEMBERSHIP OFFICER	Win Demeo	Kamarooka	36 9226
EXCURSION ORGANISER	John Lindner	62 Simpsons Rd.,E'hawk	46 7132
LIBRARIAN	Helen Boon	Kamarooka	36 9252
EDITOR	Eric Wilkinson	7 Weatherall St.Cal.Gully	46 8736

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Membership of The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in natural history. The membership subscription rates are Single $9.00 , Family $13.00, Pensioner and children, $6.00 Whirrakee subscription only, $8.00.

General Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at the Conference Rooms, Department of Agriculture, Midland Highway, Epsom. Meetings start at 7.30 p.m., and conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Excursions The assembly point for excursions is outside the Special Services Complex in Havlin St. East, Bendigo, unless otherwise specified. Full day excursions normally commence at 10.0 a.m.,(usually on a Sunday). Half day excursions normally commence at 2.0 p.m., and may be either a Saturday or Sunday. Day or half day excursions are usually held on the weekend following the General Meeting. Campouts held several times in a year, usually co-inciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

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The B.F.N.C. has two active sub-groups.

The BIRD OBSERVERS GROUP meets on the first Friday of the month at the Agriculture Department, Epsom, at 7.30 p.m.

President:	John Berry	22 Barrell St., Eaglehawk	46 9921
Secretary:	Harvey Rich,	58 Dundas Rd., Maryborough	61 1698

The MAMMAL SURVEY GROUP meets on the third Thursday of each month, (or fourth Thursday when third Thursday is day after general meeting) at 8.0 p.m. in member's home as announced in the monthly diary.

President:	Berry Vardy,	Rocky Rises Rd., Maiden Gully,	49 6214
Secretary:	John Lindner,	62 Simpson's Rd., Eaglehawk	46 7132

MR &MRS R B ALLEN
20 HOUSTON ST.
BENDIGO
3550

- DIARY -

MEETINGS

December 8th — CHRISTMAS SOCIAL, AT BURNETT LOUNGE, B.C.A.E., (Osborne St. Campus) commencing with B.Y.O. Casserole tea at 6.30 pm. B.Y.O. food, and utensils, but tea, coffee, milk, sugar, cordial, and bread and butter will be provided. This will be an informal evening, with games for the younger (and not so young) members. Newer members are especially invited to come along and get to know us better, in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

1983

January 12th. — A film night has been arranged, following the success of the experiment with a similar film night for a January meeting last year.

February 9th
1. Holiday Reminiscences - members slide night.
2. Visit by Bob Finlay of Possum Books, with his extensive range of natural history books at discounted prices, including many hard to obtain titles.

EXCURSIONS

Sunday Dec.12th. English's Bridge, Campaspe River (east of Goornong)
Leaders: Graham Hill, John Lindner.
(Picnic tea, swimming and canoeing - river conditions permitting.)

Sunday Feb.13th. Kanyapella - Fisheries and Wildlife Reserve near Echuca, and Murray River. Details in Jan./Feb. Whirrakee.

BIRD OBSERVERS GROUP

Fri.Feb.4th.
Speaker: Mr. Even Thomas.
Subject: The birds of the Wakool area, N.S.W.
Bird of the Night: Little Eagle.
7.30 pm Dept. of Agriculture, Epsom.

MAMMAL SURVEY GROUP

Thurs.Feb.17th. This meeting will be held at Graham Hill's home, 31 Curnow Street, Golden Square.